

Readings for November 11, 2018 -- 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Not Made by Human Hands

Our gifts and blessings all come from God, not from our own doing. The two widows show us how to give freely and lovingly. They reflect the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus has made for us.

Opening Prayer: (See back pages)

Reading 1 1 KGS 17:10-16

In those days, Elijah the prophet went to Zarephath.
As he arrived at the entrance of the city,
a widow was gathering sticks there; he called out to her,
"Please bring me a small cupful of water to drink."
She left to get it, and he called out after her,
"Please bring along a bit of bread."
She answered, "As the LORD, your God, lives,
I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of flour in my jar
and a little oil in my jug.
Just now I was collecting a couple of sticks,
to go in and prepare something for myself and my son;
when we have eaten it, we shall die."
Elijah said to her, "Do not be afraid. Go and do as you propose.
But first make me a little cake and bring it to me.
Then you can prepare something for yourself and your son.
For the LORD, the God of Israel, says,
'The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry,
until the day when the LORD sends rain upon the earth.'"
She left and did as Elijah had said.
She was able to eat for a year, and he and her son as well;
the jar of flour did not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry,
as the LORD had foretold through Elijah.

Responsorial Psalm PS 146:7, 8-9, 9-10

R. (1b) **Praise the Lord, my soul!**
The LORD keeps faith forever,
secures justice for the oppressed,

gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets captives free.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

The LORD gives sight to the blind.

The LORD raises up those who were bowed down;

the LORD loves the just.

The LORD protects strangers.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

The fatherless and the widow he sustains,

but the way of the wicked he thwarts.

The LORD shall reign forever;

your God, O Zion, through all generations. Alleluia.

R. Praise the Lord, my soul!

Reading 2 HEB 9:24-28

Christ did not enter into a sanctuary made by hands,

a copy of the true one, but heaven itself,

that he might now appear before God on our behalf.

Not that he might offer himself repeatedly,

as the high priest enters each year into the sanctuary

with blood that is not his own;

if that were so, he would have had to suffer repeatedly

from the foundation of the world.

But now once for all he has appeared at the end of the ages

to take away sin by his sacrifice.

Just as it is appointed that human beings die once,

and after this the judgment, so also Christ,

offered once to take away the sins of many,

will appear a second time, not to take away sin

but to bring salvation to those who eagerly await him.

Gospel MK 12:38-44

In the course of his teaching Jesus said to the crowds,

"Beware of the scribes, who like to go around in long robes

and accept greetings in the marketplaces,

seats of honor in synagogues, and places of honor at banquets.

They devour the houses of widows and, as a pretext recite lengthy prayers.

They will receive a very severe condemnation."

He sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury.

Many rich people put in large sums.

A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents.

Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them,

"Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more

than all the other contributors to the treasury.

For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth,
but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had, her whole livelihood."

Related Reflections:

You could not find two more extreme examples of utter generosity than the widows of our first and third readings. Elijah asks the widow of Zarephath to give him the little cake she was about to share with her son before they die. Amazingly, she accedes to Elijah's request. And the jar of flour and the jug of oil continue to deliver a miraculous supply.

And no figure is more familiar than the widow in the temple with her mite. These scenes occur in a gospel that teaches that "whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" ([Mk 10:44-45](#)). In that context, there can be no doubt that the lavish generosity of those women is indeed meant to be exemplary for all Christians, male and female.

Does that mean that we are not meant to be prudent and "love ourselves" so that we can better love our neighbor? Does that mean that we are not to live a balanced life, take care of our health, labor for just wages for working women, and put a little aside for retirement? I think not. But the utter outpouring of those widows should remind us that the movement of our lives is indeed to be a total gift to God and others, the kind of total gift intended by the promises expressed in the vows of marriage, religious life, and the focused commitment of so many single men and women.

Dennis Hamm, SJ. - from the St. Louis University Center for Liturgy Study website

The woman in today's Gospel story was poor because she was a widow. She was completely dependent on her male relatives for her livelihood. To be widowed meant not only losing a spouse, but more tragically, losing the one on whom you were totally dependent. Widows were forced to live off of the generosity of other male relatives and anyone in the community who might provide for one's needs.

The two coins in the woman's hand were most likely all she had. With the coins or without them, the widow was still a dependent person. She had no status in life. She was totally dependent on the grace of God, yet she was indeed rich in God's mercy.

Jesus never condemns the rich but simply says that they will find it difficult to enter the kingdom. What matters is not how much money is stored in bank accounts or kept in stocks and bonds, but rather for what that money is destined.

Will the money be used to assist others, to make the world a better place? Will it be used to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, provide for the homeless and destitute poor? Will it be used to build a culture of life? Do our lives revolve around the money or are we dependant on God who truly makes us rich? Do we behave as owners or live as stewards?

Fr. Thomas Rosica, CSB - From Salt and Light Media (saltandlighttv.org)

Prayer is a personal response to God's presence. This means that God first makes Himself present to us. Prayer is our awareness and acknowledgement of God's presence. It is what God does to us, rather than anything we do. St. John reminds us that genuine love means first of all not that we love God (which may or may not be true), but that God first loves us (1John 4:19). His love for us is more important than our love for Him. He wants and appreciates and is grateful for our love; but since His love for us is more important than our love for Him, His love deserves more of our attention.

It seems to me that there are three aspects of genuine prayer that we should keep in mind. First of all, if prayer is a personal response to God's presence, then, the beginning of prayer is to be **aware** of that presence, simply to acknowledge it, to be able to admit: "Yes God my Father, You do love life into me. Yes, You love life and being into the things around me and into all that comes into my senses. You love talents and these longings into me. etc." The focus is on God and what God does.

Armand M. Nigro, S.J. - from Articles on Prayer, www.manresa-canada.ca

Discussion questions:

In the first reading God sends Elijah on a mission, but why in the world does he tell him to seek sustenance at the home of a poor, starving widow? Does our help and sustenance often come from unlikely sources?

Have you ever experienced this?

The first reading shows us a sample of God's abundant gifts. God supplies what we need.

What kind of gifts do we often receive when we choose to live our lives closer to Jesus' example and teachings?

How might this help us to trust in God's love and care for us?

Reflect on some other moments in Scripture where we see God feeding and sustaining the people. Then, can you remember times when you've experienced God feeding and nurturing you, or someone you know?

Paul tells us in the second reading that Christ's sanctuary is not "made by hands." So, too, God's Kingdom, is opened to us through God's work. How can we RESPOND to what God has done, and continues to do for us?

How does the poor widow show us a good example of how we can respond? How do her actions reflect the sacrifice that Jesus made for us?

Jesus sits in the temple and notices the poor woman, who is often ignored as insignificant. What does this say to us about the importance of the poor, about the dignity of every human?

Closing Prayer: (Or see back pages)

Leader: Blessed are you, Creator God, for providing the rain that waters the earth.

All: Blessed be God forever.

Blessed are you, Creator God, for sending the sun that warms the fields:

All: Blessed be God forever.

Blessed are you, God of work, for strengthening the hands that harvest the crops:

All: Blessed be God forever.

Blessed are you, God of work, for guiding the way of the those who deliver the yield:

All: Blessed be God forever.

Blessed are you, Giver of Life, for feeding us with our daily bread,

and for feeding us with the love of family and friends:

All: Blessed be God forever.

We give you thanks, loving God, for all these good gifts. May we respond in love for others, giving freely and from our hearts.

Amen.

Diana Macalintal -- The Work of Your Hands, Liturgical Press, 2014

Suggested music: